

Electronic meetings of committees – procedures

Committee meetings may be conducted electronically, subject to the agreement of the Chair, by emailing the agenda and papers to all members, and seeking responses to the recommendations by email. An electronic meeting would be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- If there is little business for the committee to consider, but an item cannot wait for the next meeting to be approved.
- If it is known that many members will be unavailable and there would not be a quorum at the meeting.
- If a matter requiring a decision arises between meetings, but it would be inappropriate for the Chair to make a decision (eg processing results, graduations).

The secretary should seek a decision from the Chair that an electronic meeting is appropriate, to replace a regular scheduled meeting, or as an additional meeting, of the committee.

Generally, the decision will depend on the type of business to be conducted. Electronic meetings are suitable where simple, straight-forward decisions or resolutions can be approved or otherwise. They do not lend themselves well to items that need detailed discussion and the exploration of options.

Agenda for the electronic meeting

The agenda for the electronic meeting must contain instructions for committee members about what is required. This is done in a section at the start of the agenda, as follows

INSTRUCTIONS AND STARRING OF ITEMS

Members are asked to read and consider each item in the agenda, then vote either for or against the recommendation by placing an X in the table, as shown below.

The ‘Comments’ section is available if any amendments are required or to provide additional information for further discussion.

Example:

Item 99.9 Recommendation	For	Against X
Comment:		

Starring of items occurs as Members actually respond to an item: therefore all items should be considered starred. If there are no responses to an item, the following will apply

It is recommended:

that the documents for all unstarred agenda items be noted and, except where alternative action is noted as appropriate, all recommendations contained in those items be endorsed.

The agenda will define a time-frame for the meeting. It will say:

"Agenda and papers circulated DD/MM/YY - to be returned by DD/MM/YY 4.30pm"

When sending out the agenda and papers, the covering email should state the deadline for responses.

The covering email should also explain the conventions for the meeting.

These are that members participate and vote, by filling in the appropriate box, and recording any comments, and **circulating their responses to all the members of the committee (including the secretary.)**

In responding to the item asking members to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting, the convention is as follows:

"Any changes to the DD/MM/YY minutes need to be indicated by reply email to all. If other Members disagree, they can see on the email and say so. If a suggested change is made and no members object, that change will be incorporated into the minutes."

Sometimes, an agenda item will require one of the members of the Committee to report on an item. This is indicated on the agenda... for example, something like...

"A report will be provided by XXXXX. (XXXX is asked to circulate a brief note by email to the Committee. Please do not feel the need to do a formal report if the "update" was going to be less formal: a file note just letting us know where things are at will be acceptable.)"

Post meeting

Committee members will return a copy of the agenda, updated with their votes and comments, to the Committee Secretary by the due date.

The Committee secretary prepares a draft record of meeting for the Chair, noting whether resolutions are endorsed, or otherwise, and recording whether the recommendation has been adopted, or otherwise, in the form of an appropriate resolution – i.e., "It was resolved that...." etc.- and noting any comments made by members.

The Chair will review the draft record of meeting, instruct the secretary to make any amendments and insert follow-up action, as determined by the Chair.

The Committee secretary will then prepare a final record of the meeting (set of minutes).

Thereafter, the processes for meeting follow-up should be followed – ie circulation to members, reporting to other committees, action sheets, etc.